REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application, as presently amended and in light of the following discussion, is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-19 and 22-31 are pending in the application. Claims 1-3 are amended; and Claims 22-31 are withdrawn from consideration, and Claims 20 and 21 are canceled, by the present amendment. Support for amended Claims 1-3 can be found in the original specification, claims and drawings.[1] No new matter is presented.

In the outstanding Official Action, the title was objected to as not descriptive; Claims 1, 20 and 21 are objected to because of minor informalities; Claims 1-8, 12-16 and 19-21 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by Kawaishi (JP 08-160703); and Claims 9-11 and 17-18 were objected to as dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Applicants appreciatively acknowledge the indication of allowable subject matter. However, since Applicants consider that amended independent Claim 2 patentably defines over the applied references, the remaining dependent claims are presently maintained in dependent form.

In response to the objection to the title, the title is amended to read "METHOD, SYSTEM AND APPARATUS FOR TRANSFERRING TONER IMAGES TO BOTH SIDES OF A RECORDING MEDIUM." Accordingly, as the new title is clearly indicative of the invention to which the claims are directed, Applicants respectfully request that the objection to the title be withdrawn.

In response to the objection to Claims 1, 20 and 21, Claim 1 is amended to incorporate the recommendations set forth in the Official Action, and Claims 20 and 21 are canceled. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the Claim objections be withdrawn.

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[1] e.g., specification, p. 25, lines 13-21 and Fig. 5.

In response to the rejection based on Kawaishi Applicants respectfully submit that amended independent Claims 1 and 2, state novel features clearly not taught or rendered obvious by the applied reference.

Amended independent Claim 1 relates to a method of transferring toner images to both sides of a recording medium (e.g., duplex printing). In the method, surfaces of a first and a second intermediate image transfer body move endlessly while forming a nip. A first toner image formed on an image carrier is transferred to the second intermediate image transfer body via the first intermediate image transfer body. Then, a second toner image formed on the image carrier is transferred to the first intermediate image transfer body, only. When a recording medium is conveyed towards the side downstream of the nip, the first toner image is transferred from the second intermediate image transfer body to the first side of the recording medium and the second toner image is transferred from the first intermediate image transfer body to the second side of the recording medium. Thus, performing a duplex printing operation.

Independent Claim 1 is amended by the present amendment to recite, *inter alia*, wherein

> said ***second intermediate image transfer body is less deformable than said first intermediate image transfer body*** in a direction of thickness.

Pending independent Claim 2, while directed to an alternative embodiment, recite substantially similar features. Accordingly, the arguments presented below are also applicable to these claims.

Support for amended independent Claim 1 can be found, for example, at p. 25, lines 18-21, of the specification, which states that the "wedge-like bite of the belts 8 and 16 is reduced, so that the belts 8 and 19 more smoothly contact each other and protect the sheet P from creases." An exemplary effect of such an adjustment is also depicted in Fig. 5 of the present specification.

Turning to the applied reference, Kawaishi describes a method and apparatus for duplex printing. As depicted in Fig. 1, Kawaishi shows that a latent image is formed on a photosensitive drum via the exposure means (8), and is developed with toner via a developing device (14) to form a first toner image which is transferred to a first intermediate transfer belt (19) via a biased transfer roller (20). Then, this first toner image is transferred to the second intermediate transfer belt (23) via transfer roller (23a), and a second toner image is formed on the photosensitive drum and transferred to the first intermediate transfer belt (19). As cited in the Outstanding Official Action, paragraphs [0036]-[0038] of Kawaishi describes that the first intermediate transfer belt is made of a material that is harder or less deformable than that of the second intermediate transfer belt.

In contrast, amended independent Claim 1 recites ***wherein said second intermediate image transfer body is less deformable than said first intermediate image transfer body***. As noted above, such a configuration acts to allow the first and second intermediate image transfer bodies to make more efficient contact and protect the sheets passed therebetween from being creased.

In contrast, Kawaishi clearly describes that the material of the first image transfer belt is less deformable than the material of the second image transfer belt (23). Paragraphs [0036]-[0038] of Kawaishi specifically describe that the material for the transfer belts is selected based on resistance values and other characteristics unique to the design of Kawaishi's duplex printing device. As depicted in Fig. 1, the configuration of the image transfer belts, and corresponding structure of Kawaishi's device is completely different from the configuration depicted, for example, in Fig. 1 of the present specification. Therefore, it would not have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to modify Kawaishi to make the second intermediate transfer belt less deformable than the first intermediate image transfer belt based on the specific requirements of Kawaishi's implementation.

Therefore, Kawaishi fails to teach of suggest that ***the second intermediate image transfer belt is less deformable than the first intermediate image transfer belt***, as recited in amended independent Claim 1.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection of Claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) be withdrawn. For substantially the same reasons as given with respect to amended independent Claim 1, it is also submitted that amended independent Claim 2 patentably defines over Kawaishi.

Consequently, in view of the present amendment and in light of the foregoing comments, it is respectfully submitted that the invention defined by Claims 1-19 is patentably distinguishing over the applied reference. The present application is believed to be in condition for formal allowance and an early and favorable reconsideration of the application is therefore requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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